

Dear Readers

This is the first in a series of newsletters that you will receive from the BLM and FS about their plans to protect the greater sage-grouse and its sagebrush habitat across the western US. This newsletter provides an overview of the planning strategy and guidance on how to get involved, including a schedule of public meetings, as well as where and how to submit comments. Contact us if you would like to be removed from the mailing list or to receive future mailings via email.

How to Get Involved

- Get on the mailing list by sending a request to sagewest@blm.gov
- Visit the National Strategy Web site at: www.blm.gov/sagegrouse
- Visit the Western Region’s strategy Web site at: www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/sagegrouse/western.html
- Attend public meetings: Public meetings will be held in 26 cities across the Western Region. See previous page and schedule above.
- Submit questions: Questions regarding the National Sage-Grouse Strategy can be submitted to SageQuery@blm.gov
- Submit comments at a public meeting or via one of the methods listed below. Comments will be considered as part of the scoping process until February 16th 2012. You can submit comments even if you haven’t attended a public meeting.

E-mail: sagewest@blm.gov
Fax: 775-861-6747
US Mail: Western Region Project Manager, BLM Nevada State Office
1340 Financial Blvd., Reno, NV 89502



Public Meetings Scheduled

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Tonopah, NV - Jan 9 | Salt Lake City, UT - Jan 19 |
| Boise, ID - Jan 9 | Ontario, OR - Jan 23 |
| Ely, NV - Jan 10 | Randolph, UT - Jan 23 |
| Idaho Falls, ID – Jan 10 | Baker City, OR - Jan 24 |
| Elko, NV - Jan 11 | Snowville, UT - Jan 24 |
| Salmon, ID - Jan 11 | Burns, OR - Jan 25 |
| Winnemucca, NV - Jan 12 | Twin Falls, ID - Jan 25 |
| Dillon, MT - Jan 12 | Prineville, OR - Jan 26 |
| Lakeview, OR - Jan 17 | Pocatello, ID - Jan 26 |
| Price, UT - Jan 17 | Reno, NV - Jan 30 |
| Alturas, CA - Jan 18 | Richfield, UT - Jan 30 |
| Vernal, UT - Jan 18 | Kanab, UT - Jan 31 |
| Susanville, CA - Jan 19 | Cedar City, UT - Feb 1 |



National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy

Issue No. 1, December 2011



BLM and FS Launch National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy

This is the first in a series of newsletters about the National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Forest Service (FS) are implementing this strategy to aid in the conservation of the greater sage-grouse and to assure that conservation measures are included in each agency’s respective land use plans (LUPs). This newsletter contains background information, an overview of the planning strategy, and guidance on how to get and stay involved throughout the process.

To initiate this process, the two agencies published a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register* on December 9, 2011, announcing the beginning of a scoping period to solicit public comments and identify issues. The BLM is the lead agency on these EISs and SEISs, and the FS is participating as a cooperating agency. This process is being completed in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended, and the Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended by the National Forest Management Act of 1976. The BLM and the FS are preparing environmental impact statements (EISs) and supplemental EISs (SEISs) to identify and incorporate explicit objectives and appropriate sage-grouse conservation measures into LUPs.

Background

In April 2010, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) found that the greater sage-grouse warrants protection under the ESA but that listing the species was precluded by the need to address other, high-priority species first. One reason for this decision was an identified need for more adequate regulatory mechanisms to ensure species conservation.

As land management agencies, the BLM and FS are responsible for managing sage-grouse habitat. Since LUPs provide the regulatory mechanism for such management, the BLM and FS, through the planning process, are incorporating explicit objectives and appropriate conservation measures into LUPs. For those LUPs not already in a revision process, the BLM intends to complete revisions within the next three years to aid conservation of the greater sage-grouse and avert a potential listing under the ESA.

The planning strategy will evaluate the adequacy of LUPs and address, as necessary, revisions and amendments throughout the range of the greater sage-grouse.

The sage-grouse Bi-State Distinct Population Segment (DPS) in California and Nevada and the Columbia Basin DPS in Washington are not part of this process and are being addressed through other planning efforts.

The BLM and FS have determined that the proposed strategy is a major federal action which requires the preparation of EISs in accordance with NEPA. The agencies will seek public and agency input to identify issues to address in the EISs and coordinate with other federal, tribal, state, and local government agencies in preparing the EISs. The BLM will conduct detailed environmental studies on the proposed and alternative strategies, and analyze how implementation of each approach may affect the quality of the environment.

Overview of the National Planning Strategy

The BLM is developing a national strategy to preserve, conserve, and restore sagebrush habitat, the ecological home of the greater sage-grouse. The BLM will issue national policy and direction, based on the best available science, resource and environmental needs and information, and their multiple-use mission to guide the

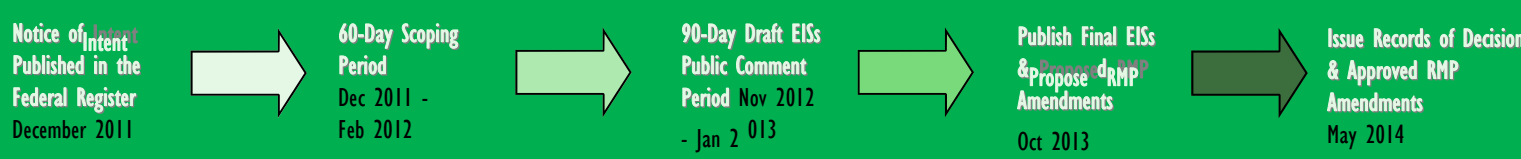


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Sage Grouse

agency’s actions in future planning efforts. At the local level, the BLM and FS will work on formal plan “amendments” for LUPs that will implement ongoing and new conservation and habitat restoration measures. As many as 98 BLM LUPs address greater sage-grouse, while the FS expects to evaluate conservation measures in as many as 9 LUPs that cover FS planning units considered high priority for the conservation of sage-grouse. LUPs to be amended are listed in the NOI, available through the project Web site.

For this planning effort, the BLM has divided the greater sage-grouse’s range into Eastern and Western Regions. Grouse and grouse habitat are affected by a variety of factors that vary in intensity in different parts of its range. Habitat alteration due to wildfire impacts the Western Region more strongly, while habitat fragmentation due to

human development has a greater influence in the Eastern Region. Dividing the species’ range into two regions makes it easier to tailor conservation actions to the specific conditions of an area. This division also allows for closer cooperation and partnerships on region-specific conservation and habitat restoration measures.

Western Regional Planning Strategy

You are receiving this newsletter because you have expressed interest in BLM and FS activities within at least one of the four sub-regions for this planning strategy: Nevada and northeastern California; Oregon; Idaho and southwestern Montana; and Utah. Each sub-region will undertake its own EIS. Each sub-region-specific EIS will specifically address identified key issues and will analyze the impacts of amending all pertinent LUPs with that guidance. The Record of Decision issued at the end of the EIS process will amend the LUPs to include the new management direction.

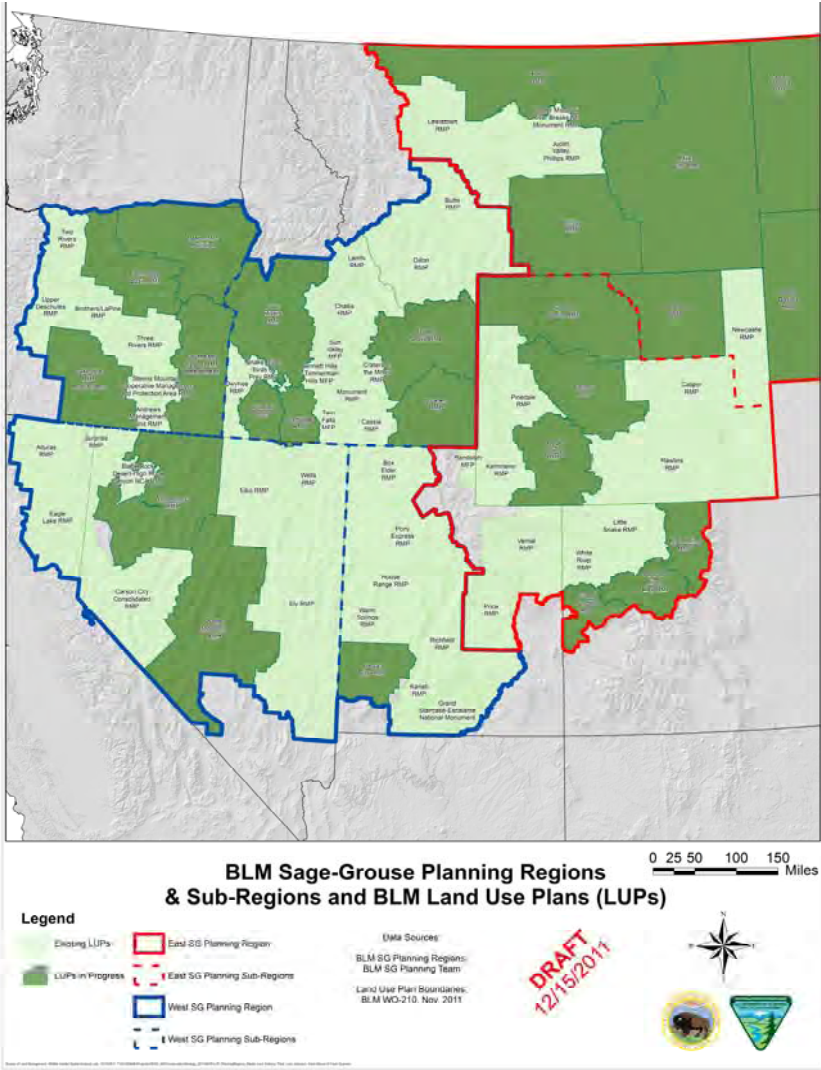
Next Steps

The initial step in the EIS process is *scoping*, during which the agencies coordinate with the public and other agencies to identify issues of concern to be addressed in the EIS, potential effects, and the degree to which these effects will be analyzed. The BLM will host 26 scoping meetings across the four sub-regions where the public may submit comments on FS and BLM LUPs. While all meetings will accept scoping comments on the newly initiated plan amendments started with the recent NOI, some areas may have plan changes already underway in their local BLM District. In these areas, meetings will also provide information regarding the stage of the process that the local plan is in, which may be too far along to accept additional scoping comments on that particular plan. Meeting dates and locations are listed on the next page.

A Scoping Report will summarize all public input and will be made available on the project Web site (see back page). The project team will then incorporate public input, as appropriate under NEPA, into the sub-region-specific EISs. In the latter part of 2012, each sub-region will release its Draft EIS. You will then have an opportunity to review what the team has prepared and comment on changes you would like to see. With that feedback, each sub-region team will develop a Final EIS, which are scheduled for release in the fall of 2013. Finally, each BLM sub-region team will have its own EIS and accompanying Record of Decision and will complete the process by incorporating the planning strategy into the respective LUPs.

Public Meetings Scheduled for Early 2012

Visit our Web site and attend the public scoping and informational meetings to learn more about the project, visit with BLM and FS staff, view maps, and submit comments. All meetings (except Ely) will run from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm and will include informational materials and an opportunity to submit comments. Note the Ely meeting will run from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm. Presentation materials will be on display throughout the meeting and will be available on the project Web site. Specific locations for these meetings will be announced through local media and on the BLM’s greater sage-grouse Web site, listed on the back page.



City/State	Date	Location
Tonopah NV	Mon 1/9	Tonopah Convention Center 301 Brougher Avenue Tonopah, Nevada
Boise ID	Mon 1/9	Red Lion Boise Hotel 1800 Fairview Avenue Boise Idaho
Ely NV	Tue 1/10	Ely District BLM Office 702 North Industrial Way Ely, Nevada * 4-6 pm meeting
Idaho Falls ID	Tue 1/10	Red Lion Hotel 475 River Parkway Idaho Falls, Idaho
Elko NV	Wed 1/11	Hilton Garden Inn 3650 Idaho Street Elko, Nevada
Salmon ID	Wed 1/11	Salmon Valley Business & Innovation Center 803 Monroe Street, Salmon, Idaho
Winnemucca NV	Thurs 1/12	Winnemucca Inn 741 W. Winnemucca Boulevard Winnemucca, Nevada
Dillon MT	Thurs 1/12	National Guard Armory 1050 Highway 41 Dillon, Montana
Lakeview OR	Tues 1/17	BLM Lakeview District Office 1301 South G Street Lakeview, Oregon
Price UT	Tues 1/17	Carbon County Event Center 310 South Fairgrounds Road Price, Utah
Alturas CA	Wed 1/18	Sacred Heart Catholic Church Parish Hall 507 E 4th Street, Alturas, California
Vernal UT	Wed 1/18	Western Park Convention Center 300 East 200 South Vernal, Utah
Susanville CA	Thurs 1/19	Jensen Hall, Lassen County Fairgrounds, Susanville, California

City/State	Date	Location
Salt Lake City UT	Thurs 1/19	Hampton Inn & Suites 307 North Admiral Byrd Road Salt Lake City, Utah
Ontario OR	Mon 1/23	Four Rivers Cultural Center 676 SW 5th Avenue Ontario, Oregon
Randolph UT	Mon 1/23	Randolph Senior Center 5 North Main Street Randolph, Utah
Baker City OR	Tues 1/24	Baker County Library 2400 Resort Street Baker City, Oregon
Snowville UT	Tues 1/24	Snowville Town Hall 20 West Main Street Snowville, Utah
Burns OR	Wed 1/25	Harney County Senior Center 17 S. Alder Avenue Burns, Oregon
Twin Falls ID	Wed 1/25	Canyon Springs Red Lion Inn 1357 Blue Lakes Boulevard Twin Falls, Idaho
Prineville OR	Thurs 1/26	Stafford Inn 1773 NE Third Street Prineville, Oregon
Pocatello ID	Thurs 1/26	The Clarion 1399 Pocatello Bench Road Pocatello, Idaho
Reno NV	Mon 1/30	Hyatt Place 1790 East Plumb Lane Reno, Nevada
Richfield UT	Mon 1/30	Sevier County Clerks Room #B46 Auditorium 250 N. Main Ave., Richfield Utah
Kanab UT	Tues 1/31	Kane City Library 374 North Main Street Kanab, Utah
Cedar City UT	Wed 2/1	Heritage Center -Festival Hall 105 N. 100 E. Cedar City, Utah